

Message Text

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SUBJECT: MAURITIUS WEEKLY REVIEW - AUGUST 4, 1978-SUMMARY

REF: (A) PORT LOUIS 844 (DTG 280730Z JULY 78)
(B) PORT LOUIS A-65 (AUG. 4, 1978)

1. THE RETURN TO MAURITIUS OF PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM FROM THE OAU SUMMIT ON JULY 27 PERMITTED SOME AMELIORATION OF TWO PROBLEMS THAT HAD BEEN FESTERING DURING HIS ABSANCE. ONE WAS A SLOW-DOWN BY THE PORT WORKERS, WHO WERE UNHAPPY OVER THE JAILING OF THEIR UNION'S SECRETARY AND OVER THE RECENT WAGE SETTLEMENT. THE SLOW-DOWN HAD THREATENED TO SHUT DOWN AT LEAST TWELVE SUGAR FACTORIES WHICH WERE RUNNING OUT OF STORAGE SPACE FOR THEIR SUGAR. RAMGOOLAM AND THE LABOR MINISTER, WHO HAD ALSO BEEN ABROAD, GOT THE PORT WORKERS TO AGREE TO RESUME NORMAL WORK SCHEDULES WHILE
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NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE. THE OTHER ISSUE FACING RAMGOOLAM WAS THE RECENT JAILING OF 14 LEADERS OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY, THE MAURITIAN MILITANT MOVEMENT (MMM), FOR VIOLATIONS OF THE PUBLIC ORDER ACT. RAM DEFUSED THIS SITUATION SOMEWHAT BY RECOMMENDING THAT THE MMM SEEK A REDUCTION OF THE SENTENCES BY THE COMMISSION FOR THE PREROGATIVE OF MERCY. HE ALSO PROMISED THAT THE

PUBLIC ORDER ACT WOULD BE TAKEN UP BY THE ASSEMBLY WHEN IT RESUMES SITTING IN NOVEMBER, AND AMENDMENTS BY BOTH GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION WILL BE WELCOMED. MMM LEADER PAUL BERENGER CALLED THE P.M.'S ATTITUDE "POSITIVE," AND HE ENCOURAGED HIS PORT UNION TO RESUME LFULL WORK.

2. COMMENTING ON THE OAU CONFERENCE, RAMGOOLAM SAID THE SUMMIT HAD CHOSEN THE PATH OF "MODERATION," AND "EXTREMISM" HAD BEEN AVOIDED. HE FOUND EVIDENCE THAT THE IDEOLOGH OF COMMUNISM IS BEING "DEFEATED" IN AFRICA.

3. ON AUGUST 2 HARISH BOODHOO, LEADER OF HE GROUP OF LABOR PARTY DISSIDENT DEPUTIES, SET OFF ON A THREE-MONTH "PILGRIMAGE" TO ALL THE VILLAGES AND HAMLETS OF THE ISLAND. HIS THEME WILL BE "THE TRUTH" AND HIS AIM IS TO MAKE CONTACT WITH THE "LITTLE PEPPL," HEAR THEIR GRIEVANCES AND MOBILIZE THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE LABOR PARTY AND THE REFORMS HIS DISSIDENT GROUP WISH TO FORCE ON THE PRIME MINISTER. IN REMARKS TO THE PRESS BEFORE SETTING OFF, BOODHOO WAS HARSHLY CRITICAL OF THE LABOR PARTY'S LEADERSHIP, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, WHOM HE ACCUSED OF FAILING TO GOVERN, OF SIMPLY REACTING TO EVENTS, OF ONLY RESPONDING TO PRESSURE FROM THE "YES MEN" AND "PROFESSIONAL BLACK-MAILERS" WHO SURROUND HIM, AND OF COMING UP WITHVA CONFIDENTIAL

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CARELESS SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS AT THE VERY LAST MINUTE. BOODHOO REMARKED THAT HIS EFFORT TO REFORM AND REVITALIZE THE LABOR PARTY MAY RESULT IN HIS EXPULSION FROM IT, BUT HE SAID THERE ARE OTHERS WHO WILL CARRY ON WITHOUT HIM. BOODHOO'S GROUP INCREASED FROM FIVE TO SIX WHEN CLAREL MALHERBE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY AT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, DECLARED HIS ALLEGIANCE TO BOODHOO AND RESIGNED HIS POST TO FREE HIMSELF FROM CABINET DISCIPLINE. HIS PARTICULAR PEEVE IS THE PROJECT FOR A NEW AIRPORT IN THE NORTH OF THE ISLAND, WHICH HE THINKS REEKS OF CORRUPTION AND BAD PLANNING.

4. LABOR MINISTER MOHAMED, THE ONLY MUSLIM IN THE CABINET, ANNOUNCED ON AUGUST 1 THAT HE PLANS TO RESIGN FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND QUIT POLITICS BEFORE THE END OF THE YEAR. HE IS SEEKING AN AMBASSADORIAL POST OR MAY RESUME HIS LAW PRACTICE. HE IS DEPRESSED BY THE FAILURE OF THEMUSLIM COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT COALITION. A BRITISHER WHO IS CLOSE TO HE P.M. AND WHO HEADS THE CENTRAL WATER AUTHORITY IS BEING REMOVED FROM HIS POST, APPARENTLY AS A SOP TO THE BOODHOO GROUP, WHO HAVE COMPLAINED ABOUT RAMGOOLAM'S

"CRONIES" OCCUPYING HIGH POSTS PAST RETIREMENT AGE.

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